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ON THE

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“COLUMBUS DAY.”

BY

JUDGE C. C. BALDWIN, LL. D.

PRESIDENT OF THE WESTERN RESERVE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

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LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

We are assembled to-day to commemorate an event which, with its results, is the most important in the history of present civilized man, excepting only the Christian religion.

The opening of so large a new world, now the center of wealth and prosperity, with all its varied experiences, makes its history much more practical, instructive and interesting to us than all the history of the old world.

We are here to remember especially the event. If some other than Columbus had made the discovery we should still be here as now. Yet every, or nearly every, great event in the world's history, however, has its hero, and Columbus was a man of great qualities.

All that can be known of his life and surroundings has been thoroughly studied, and I can tell you nothing you could not otherwise easily learn. His own writings were abundant. Irving first in Spain, and after Varnhagen of Germany, and Harriette, of Paris, everywhere have exhaustively studied his life and times.

In our own country that stupendous monument of learning, *The Narrative and Critical History of America*, edited by Mr. Justin Winsor, has largely and amply revealed him. This was preceded by the full, careful, charming narrative of Irving and has been followed by Mr. Winsor's life of Columbus, a careful, broad and critical work, and later by Mr. John Fiske's *Discovery of America*—a model of learning and criticism, and there is just from the press selections of what is of most interest in the writings of Columbus, edited by Mr. Paul Leicester Ford. The life of none has been more studiously exhibited with such wealth of literary talent, of learning and of illustration in text and engraving.

Columbus was born about the year 1436, in the city of Genoa. His father had been engaged in business and in tavern keeping near Genoa—ending his days in Genoa. Although the old gentleman died in debt he had a care in the education of his children, and Christopher had an education in Latin (then the language of general learning) and in navigation. It is said he was a student at the University at Pavia.

All his surroundings favored his after career. I have never been to Genoa but once, and then most unfortunately I was detained in the harbor on an Italian steamer unable to land because my passport was viséd to Naples.

But all Genoa, with its noble buildings rises from the sea and looks down upon it. In the evening the harbor was filled with small boats and the soft musical songs of the boatmen coming from every direction were like the sweetest opera—without the instruments that so often interrupt. If Genoa seems fascinating from the sea one can well imagine that no harbor adds more fascination to a city. The young active mind could hardly have failed to have a strong taste for the sea, and we are not surprised that in after days, when he was providing for his future name in the disposition of a tenth and an eighth of the revenue of what he might well expect to be a vast empire—he provided “to have and maintain in the city of Genoa one person of our lineage to reside there with his wife and appoint him a sufficient revenue to enable to live decent as a person closely connected with the family of which he is to be the root and basis in that city.”

The commerce of the world had already grown. The exceedingly remunerative trade of the east was carried on by Genoa and Venice.

So that as an educated youth, with taste and experience on the sea, where the riches of a wealthy city came from commerce, and that largely with the East Indies, his mind from early childhood was intelligently upon the problems of navigation. New maps and new routes of navigation were extremely practical matters, and the people of Genoa lived in such problems.

Columbus had skill as a draughtsman and took to the making of charts for seamen's use, a business that made it his daily life to consider the advanced problems of navigation, for when the maps used were not printed, but drawn by hand, the making of every map caused such questions to arise and each customer would have personal experience to relate. There must have been a close competition for the

highest qualities of a navigator. By 1470 Columbus had become well known for his skill in charts.

It was no new theory that the earth was round. Not that the general public had such beliefs. The ignorant were very likely to believe firmly the evidence of their senses, that the world was flat and there were geographers who claimed even that the Holy Scriptures taught that the earth was flat and who berated the blasphemies of those who stultified themselves in talking of antipodes and who believed that trees grew downward and rain fell upward.

But Aristotle, Seneca, Strabo, Roger Bacon and many other learned men had held that the earth was round and it was the opinion of some of the most learned geographers of the time of Columbus.

The trade of the east sought an all water route free from interruption on the way, and the question whether Africa could be sailed around had by 1487 just been settled after much questioning, and many doubts whether water extended round it on the south, whether if a vessel sailed round it could sail back, and even whether it was possible to cross the torrid zone.

Credulous Herodotus related, that it had been said that before his time Africa had been circumnavigated, but this story was not believed even by him for the very reason that makes it believed in these times. The voyager reported that the sun appeared to be to the north of the mariners, a thing Herodotus deemed impossible.

Bacon's views were presented in a volume entitled, *Imago Mundi*, and the copy belonging to Columbus has in it his own numerous annotations.

In 1471, the equator had been crossed. In 1484, the Congo was reached by Diego Cam, who the next year sailed 1,000 miles further.

In 1487, Dias had sailed around the south of Africa, but not to India. In his report he named its south cape, Stormy Cape, but King John II., of Portugal, named it the "Cape of Good Hope," believing an ocean route to the Indies was found.

On the vessel of Dias during this voyage was Bartholomew Columbus, the intimate brother of Christopher.

The Indies had not yet been reached by water and the next year Bartholomew was in England advocating the trial of the other route already urged by Christopher. Columbus was already in Spain from 1484, and spoke of the years from 1484 to 1492 as "dragged out in disputations."

As early as 1470, both the brothers had been in Portugal, map making and sailing, and both had sailed down the African coast, and Columbus afterwards says he had been from the first advocating his enterprise.

Alphonso, King of Portugal, was actively seeking the way to the Indies. Probably through the influence of Columbus he applied as early as 1474 to Toscanelli, an eminent Florentine astronomer, to know if there could be a shorter route than around Africa.

In a letter from Toscanelli to Columbus, dated 25th June, 1474, he not only seemed to think the voyage to the East Indies possible, but he had even sent a map to the king.

Columbus evidently wanted Toscanelli's full influence, and a subsequent letter of Toscanelli is more explicit when he says:

"I regard as noble and grand your project of sailing from East to West according to the indications furnished in the map I sent you and which would more plainly appear upon a sphere." He is pleased to see "that the voyage has become not only possible but certain, fraught with honor as it must be and inestimable gain and most lofty fame among all Christian people." Toscanelli further does not wonder that Columbus "you who are of great courage and the whole Portuguese nation which has always had men distinguished in all such enterprises are now inflamed with desire to execute the said voyage."

The map of Toscanelli was the companion of Columbus upon his first voyage. The original map is lost but it was fully described and may be quite accurately replaced and is very much like the Martin Behaim globe of 1492. On it the East Indies and Japan are laid down with supposed accuracy.

Toscanelli made Asia much too wide. Columbus estimated the distance to Japan to be not over 2,500 miles, by the west and the whole success of his scheme was upon the finding a short route to the Indies. It was as necessary to the success of the scheme of Columbus to show that the Atlantic ocean was not too wide, and the Behaim Globe of 1492, by a friend of Columbus, represents the distance as less than that of Toscanelli. Such was the belief of Columbus himself. In a letter to Ferdinand and Isabella, Columbus quotes old authorities, including scripture. He cites Pliny and says:

“The master of scholastic learning, in commenting upon Genesis, says that the waters are not very extensive and that although when they were first created they covered the earth, they were yet vaporous, like a cloud, and that afterwards they became condensed and occupied but small space, and in this notion Nicolas de Lira agrees. Aristotle says that the world is small and the water very limited in extent and that it is easy to pass from Spain to the Indies and this is confirmed by Avenrutz,” (an Arabian of the 12th century), “and by Cardinal Pedro de Aliaco,” (author of Columbus’ favorite book, *Imago Mundi*), “who in supporting this opinion shows that it agrees with that of Seneca, and says that Aristotle had been enabled to gain information respecting the world by means of Alexander the Great, and Seneca by means of Nero and Pliny, through the Romans, all of them having expended large sums of money and employed a vast number of people in diligent inquiry concerning the secrets of the world.”

He proceeds to quote other authorities still older. To rely upon authorities so old seems strange, but they were almost all there were, the “Dark Ages” having intervened.

If Columbus himself believed as appeared in his favorite the “Image of the World,” the circumference of the world to be 20,500 miles the distance would be much less than reality.

Although Toscanelli, in 1474, thought the voyage would shortly be made, Columbus was yet to press his design for

eighteen long years. Eleven years, until 1485, he remained in Portugal with hopes often disappointed.

That was the leading nation in discovery, but it was busy in wars, in the adventures in navigation already made and the demands of Columbus for himself were high. He seems to have been an ambitious man—anxious to form a family with hereditary titles and honors.

The prejudices of the times were against the enterprise. Grant the theory of the burning zone to be dispelled by the African voyages, it was evident that a ship disappearing in the distance seemed to be going down hill, and could it ever return sailing up hill? Columbus' son, Ferdinand, names this as an argument used with force. There were other vague dangers and real ones, too. The vessels were small and awkward—hardly fit to beat against the wind, and the compass not long known to Europe. The means of getting latitude and longitude were poor indeed, and the worms of warm latitudes ate through the unprotected wood.

Columbus himself on his third voyage wrote that his vessels "were so eaten by the teredo they could scarcely be kept above water."

The matter was referred to a number of cosmographers of supposed learning who condemned the scheme as visionary.

At the end of the eleven years, tired Columbus sent his brother to France and England while he went to Spain, but it was still seven years before Ferdinand and Isabella, busy in wars and slow of faith, were to help him.

His adventures were romantic, touching, and have been often told. It was even true that stopping with his son at a monastery he interested a monk who had been father confessor to the queen, and who, believing, interested the queen.

The negotiation was even then broken off and Columbus started on his mule for France when he was recalled and the bargain was concluded.

All the romantic story of Queen Isabella being the support of the enterprise is true.

Columbus himself in 1500 wrote, "All proved incredulous except the Queen to whom the Lord gave the spirit of intel-

ligence and the necessary courage and made her heiress of all as a dear and well beloved daughter. I went to take possession in her royal name.”

On Friday, Aug. 3, 1492, he set sail with three vessels. He ran first south until he reached the latitude upon which he expected to find Japan (Cipango) and Chinese cities beyond. They then turned to the west. Columbus kept two reckonings one to exhibit and one for himself. Yet there was much trouble.

The story is familiar, and the first land was seen Friday, October 12, 1492, or new style on October 21st, to-day, just four hundred years ago.

I am not going to linger over his voyage, or his trouble. He had in his opinion found Asia and named the east coast of Cuba “Alpha and Omega”—Alpha by the new and Omega by the old route. Having stopped at Portugal on the way for safety from storms, he reached Palos on the 15th of March, 1493.

Columbus was the hero of the time, and expectation of wealth from commerce was immense. Admiral Columbus sailed again from Cadiz, Sept. 25, 1493, and instead of 3 ships and 90 men he had 17 ships and 1,500 men. He renewed his vow to rescue the Holy Sepulchre with an army of 50,000 foot and 4,000 horse, to be followed in 7 years by another as large. The second expedition reached land on the 3rd November. Various of the West India Islands were discovered. Columbus hoped to reach the Ganges and circumnavigate the globe but the crews were unwilling. In June, 1496, he had returned to Spain, and after waiting a month was kindly received.

The third expedition started May 30, 1498, carrying in six ships 200 men besides the sailors.

In this voyage he passed along the main shore of the continent at the mouth of the Orinoco, and, by the amount of fresh water, guessed the land to be large. But it was more necessary to success to find gold than to trace a continent. Indeed, this was for him a most unfortunate voyage. His various unfortunate adventures are dramatically set forth by

Irving and Fiske. In fact, no statement could make them undramatic. Boabdilla, fresh from Spain, and claiming authority from royal commission, after Columbus had encountered much trouble, and distress and hardship, sent him home to Spain in disgrace and in chains.

It was a time of intense humiliation. "I have now reached that point," wrote Columbus, "that there is no man so vile, but thinks it his right to insult me. But," said he, "the day will come when the world will reckon it as a virtue to him who has not given his consent to their abuse."

Columbus had a stately presence—tall, well proportioned, with a ruddy complexion, keen eyes and white hair; and the figure of the discoverer, passing bound in chains through the streets of Cadiz, in December, 1500, awakened universal sympathy. He was released at once, and on the 11th of May, 1502, started on his last voyage, with four small vessels of from 50 to 70 tons each, and 150 men. He expected to reach Cochin China. He reached Honduras, and for the second time touched the continent, and this time a considerable civilization. Columbus returned to Jamaica and suffered a terrible year. On the 7th of November, 1504, he landed in Spain. His friend, Queen Isabella, was on her dying bed. Her death left his enemies powerful. He spent eighteen months in sickness and poverty and died at Valladolid, May 20, 1506. "So little heed," says Mr. Fiske, "was taken of his passing away, that the local annals of that city, which give almost every insignificant event from 1333 to 1539 day by day, do not mention it."

A letter written to Ferdinand and Isabella relating the events of his last voyage, sets forth his feelings while on the voyage and they may well have continued the same to his death.

"I am indeed in as ruined a condition as I have related—hitherto I have wept over others, may Heaven now have mercy upon me and may the earth weep for me. * * Solitary in my trouble, sick and in daily expectation of death, surrounded by millions of hostile savages, full of cruelty, and thus separated from the blessed sacraments of

our Holy Church, how will my soul be forgotten, if it be separated from the body in this foreign land. Weep for me whoever has charity, truth and justice.

“I did not come out on this voyage to gain to myself honor or wealth; this a certain fact, for at that time all hope of such a thing was dead. I do not lie when I say that I went to your Highness with honest purpose of heart and sincere zeal in your cause. I humbly beseech your Highness that if it please God to rescue me from this place you will graciously sanction my pilgrimage to Rome and other holy places.”

“Done in the Indies, in the Island of Jamaica, on the 7th of July, in the year one thousand five hundred and three.”

Columbus had some prophetic glimpse of the future. He said:

“I must be re-established in reputation and spoken of throughout the universe, for the things I have done are such that they must gain day by day in the estimation of mankind.”

At the end of 400 years from the landing at the first voyage he has so many and such honors as have never been bestowed upon any man.

Columbus was really a man of great qualities and his memory is not simply great by accident. In connection with his name has been much discussion of the undoubted previous Icelandic discovery at the north. That discovery, in my opinion, detracts not at all from his merit, and has nothing to do with the event we commemorate. It is plain from the arguments adduced by Messrs. Harrisse, Winsor and Fiske, that he knew nothing of that discovery. It was an accidental and dead matter. It would have helped him in argument in the long eighteen years of urging from 1474 to 1492.

Columbus never knew that he had discovered a continent previously unknown. His object was a new route to the East Indies. Disappointed at first in not finding cities and wealth, he persevered still to find Asia. It seems quite curious, but on proper understanding was not so much so, that on his sec-

ond voyage all, at his suggestion, signed a paper and made solemn oath that they had reached the coast of Asia.

The merit of Columbus was not from accident but that he was most intelligent and learned as a seaman and as a geographer of his age: that coming to his conclusion for the best of reasons—far beyond the comprehension of most—that he with energy and persistence for many years urged the attempt, that with greater courage than any other he undertook the unknown voyage, where no man had ever been, that undaunted by treachery, by sickness, by prison and chains, by poverty and disgrace, he persisted in his undertaking.

These qualities are much higher to be praised than the mere accident of what land he struck and, indeed, his conclusions were those best warranted by the times. Had he been ignorant he would have been more likely to have guessed correctly.

The gift of America to civilized man was a strange one to be made at so late a day in the world's history.

I said at start it was the greatest gift of Providence save the gift of Christianity. The very lateness of the discovery added vastly to its value. If the life of man is more than mere living, more than meat and drink, this continent has been of surpassing value.

Yet those parts now of least value were then the greatest. The search was for gold and silver, and all the present centre of empire was neglected.

The march even of discovery was slow. In 1535, forty-three years after 1492, the mouth of the St. Lawrence was found.

In 115 years after 1492 the first settlement was made in Virginia.

In 128 years after 1492 the first settlement was made in New England.

It was 123 years after 1492 that the first of the Great Lakes (Huron) was discovered by Champlain.

In 1744 (252 years) the best of draughtsmen of maps—Bellin of Paris—said of the south coast of Lake Erie, on his map of it: “Toute cette coste n’est presque point connue.”

“All this coast is nearly unknown.” The very title of the land on which we stand—hardly a quarter across the continent—grew from a grant made in 1660, (168 years), supposing that the American continent did not reach so far.

It is said this error arose from ideas at the Isthmus of Darien, where the lands are narrow, and Columbus on his fourth voyage was told the other ocean was near by. The continent, when learned to be one, was long represented as very narrow, and even La Salle, in 1670, was seeking a course to the South Sea, and it is said Lachine, at Montreal, was named in derision of his search for China. Even 100 years ago—after three quarters of our four hundred years had passed—very, *very* little was known of Ohio.

The course of the lake was unknown and the Connecticut Land Company agreeing to give, to stifle the competition of its rival—the Excess Company—all over 3,000,000 of acres in the Western Reserve, found its own possessions were not so much.

Having taken three hundred years to reach this point, what has the last hundred years accomplished? More people in Ohio hear of Columbus than all the inhabitants of the United States at the Revolution.

The State that has in the last thirty years furnished more Presidents and Generals than any other State, and so many able and eminent business men, and travelers, may well claim a place at the head.

The whole time from the first settlement of Ohio is within the actual life time of a person lately deceased near us.* And almost within the life time of one of the founders of Oberlin who has this week celebrated, in Berea, her centennial birthday.†

*NOTE.—Martin Kellogg, born 1786, and lately deceased, in Bronson, O.

†Mrs. Lydia Brewer Ingersoll.

From complete savagery—through settlements, collisions, wars, houses, roads, canals, railroads and electricity are all within that life time. What a rapid development of the life and history of man.

It is the glory of Columbus that he was the greatest discoverer in the world. The years succeeding him saw many men and most of the nations of Europe striving to excel in discovery—to share its honors, its pleasures and its profits.

The pleasure of discovery is within the knowledge of all of us. We all and always like new places, new travel, new experiences, to go where no one else has gone, to learn what no one else has learned. Yet we hardly realize how much it enters into our pleasures.

In Mr. Hamerton's *Unknown River* he says truly that the truest change and best novelty is "especially in the zest of free and personal discovery."

The authorities who have appointed this holiday have indicated that Discovery day is to be an educational day.

I think the best lesson of the day is that the age of discovery is not over, that history is nowhere so open to individual reward.

The lessons of history are in contrasts, its romance in unexpected growth and events, its crowning glory is such development, in so short a time as we have in Ohio.

These contrasts are vivid even in the memory of the living and the whole hundred years of history here is of easy study.

The study of one locality—say the Reserve—its history in discovery, in geography, in wars, in contrasts, in civilization, is as worthy and as easy for the historical voyager as any in the world. It is like the study of nature, and if the student will not burden his mind with too many dates, but will commence with an investigation small enough at first he is sure to be pleased.

Two of your teachers to my knowledge have used this country to excellent purpose in science. One has made the world look at Plumb Creek to learn how long since the Ice Period.

I am sorry the old lady has proved so unsteady in her old age as to inspire some want of confidence. I have this summer been in distant lands with another who finds much in Lorain county, and much to connect that distant land in geological history with this.

Science and history lie all about us.

The man best learned knows what is or has been about him and enjoys life the best. He gets most profit and most pleasure.

That the present pursuit of history has partly the pleasure of discovery results from the change of views and methods of very recent years.

Mr. Spencer, in his little work on education, says: "That which constitutes history properly so called is in great part omitted from works on that subject." "In past histories the doings of the king fills the entire picture to which the national life forms but an obscure background." "That which really concerns us to know is the national history of society."

Mr. Spencer enlarges upon this in an essay well worth reading but too long to use.

In a wide sense history is the relation of all past experience. Every scientist has to go to history whether it has that name or not. The politician does not go there enough. Mr. Freeman has said "that history is but past politics and that past politics are present history"; too narrow a definition, not observed by Mr. Freeman in practice, or his writings would not be so interesting.

Better is the definition of Thucydides: "History is philosophy teaching by example."

That history is really the most valuable which is at the same time most interesting and open to discovery, that which in some way touches our lives or something that is around us or concerns us.

In old days biography had charms which history lacked, because there was in it more life and a closer touch with human nature. But there is no reason why history should not have these charms, and every reason why it should.

I have said elsewhere that he who knows well any past time of his own locality, has traveled abroad. To even learn from one's grandmother how people lived fifty years ago, is history—how they dressed, what they wore, who made it, of what material or fashion or kind; what education, what books were read, how much; what daily occupation to each; what was talked of, how and where; what was eaten, how different from now, how prepared; what feelings as to religion, or to difference of views.

Anyone who would from such information make a full picture of life in any locality, would make a valuable contribution to history.

The discoveries of Columbus have led to such results as only Omniscience could have foreseen.

I have intimated that the educational value of the results is above all other save religion. The civilization of Southern Europe grew largely from the collision of different nations civilized and uncivilized around the Mediterranean Sea.

So collision with the barbarians at the north, (our ancestors), led to their civilization. It is less than five times the four hundred years since Cæsar landed where Britons were savages. Only two and a half times that since William conquered Britain and the life of the English nation commenced.

But by the time of the discovery, Europe was well settled. Where was the evolutionary field for fresh and rapid education in life, manners and government? Where but in the New World, given to the Old by Columbus?

Discoveries and settlements were made by different nations in different zones at different times and with different purposes.

The minute history of the differing colonies has been often related. Pilgrims and Puritans, Catholics, Calvinists, Church of England, Baptists and Quakers dominated in different colonies. The constitutions of no two were alike. There were English, Dutch and Swedes.

Even the Puritans dwelt so long in Holland that their polity was strongly colored by that abode. The town gov-

ernments of New England and the colonial governments of New England and elsewhere gave constant opportunity for education in government, and such individual responsibility and care as made that education certain and practical.

The colonies, in a wild land with savage enemies, learned to care for themselves and the unanimity with which thirteen colonies so differing in tone of life and religion, joined in a declaration, to the rest of the world, that they were independent was strange.

There were many experiments before that in finance, political economy and government.

Our constitution was made by the wisest legislators that ever lived, because they went to the best school of government that ever existed. The confederation with its weak form of government grew stronger from force of evolution. It *needed* to be stronger.

Since—how many different confederacies, how many different views, carried also, at last to such bloody issues.

Where in the world was there ever such a university of history. Where such experiences in manners or morals, in ruling or in religion, in business life and in all that can interest man.

In short this discovery of Columbus has led to vast development in half a globe—to the evolution of the best governments and most experience in affairs in a hemisphere of highest civilization, with many wealthy and populous nations.

This history is no barren thing. The nation pays a wise and a proper tribute to the overruling wisdom of Divine Providence—acting through an agent wise in the learning of his day and persistent in business, courageous and bold in act, whose life in itself is a worthy study and incentive, whose very merits led to misfortune in his own life, the glory he so wished coming long after his decease.

There are no more such worlds to conquer, and the achievement and its results must ever be without a parallel.



